



State of California
Respiratory Care Board
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February 25, 2003

Inquiry: Registered nurses have been concerned that some facilities are not staffing respiratory professionals at a safe level. At the DHS hearing in Los Angeles November 15, 2002, a respiratory care practitioner testified that she had been the only therapist on duty one night. That night there were sixteen ventilators. In addition, she was required to provide respiratory treatments to patients in the emergency department and attend any code blue events. We believe the intention of the regulations is to assure that each respiratory professional be available to the patients.

Does your Board have information regarding ratios for RT and/or RCP? We think 1 RCP for four ventilators would be in compliance with the regulations pasted below from the DHS site. Any information would help us help the patients in our care will be appreciated.

Response: The Practice Act for licensed respiratory care practitioners does not currently have any language specific to staffing requirements. As you indicated, title 22 does have some language, but it is limited primarily to the care of patients on mechanical ventilation. The American Association for Respiratory Care has developed and published practice standards that include recommended time standards for appropriate staffing. Their contact information is listed below for your convenience:

American Association for Respiratory Care (AARC)

11030 Ables Lane
Dallas, TX 75229
(972) 243-2272

I believe it would be prudent for our board to evaluate this issue and make appropriate recommendations to create legislation changes that would enhance patient safety and treatment.

Reference # 2002-C-50

